

CLAIMS

1. A method of providing an apparatus for releasing a reagent in a controlled atmosphere or vacuum packaging environment including in combination, a sealed bag or container adapted to contain the reagent, the sealed bag or container associated with an evacuation chamber, wherein in operation, exposure to a pressure differential or vacuum within the chamber causes the reagent to be released from the bag or container into the chamber.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sealed bag or container is an enclosed pouch of a film or similar material which also contains a gas which expands as a result of a pressure differential outside of the bag or container, the expansion of the gas thereby rupturing the bag or container and releasing a first component of the reagent.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the reagent is activated by bringing two or more components or substances together by the rupturing or opening of the container within a barrier bag or within a vacuum chamber.
4. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the film is substantially gas impermeable, and is not particularly stretchy, so that the pressure differential across the bag or container will cause it to burst.
5. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the bag or container has a weakened portion, or is made of a material which is designed to delaminate when the pressure differential exceeds a specified value.
6. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein a first component reagent, is released by the pressure differential across a first sealed container.
7. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the gas is an inert gas such as nitrogen.
8. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the evacuation chamber is a vessel from which air can be evacuated before the chamber is hermetically sealed.
9. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the invention resides in a method of reducing oxygen from prepackaged food products including the steps of:

placing the packaged food products within an evacuation chamber associated with a sealed container containing an oxygen absorbing reagent,

5 evacuating gas from the evacuation chamber wherein the pressure differential in the evacuation chamber causes the sealed container to rupture thereby releasing or activating the oxygen absorbing reagent to absorb oxygen in the chamber,

hermetically sealing the evacuation chamber containing the packaged food products.

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the oxygen absorbing reagent in the sealed container is a metal halide-coated metal powder with a high oxygen affinity or
10 alternatively an equivalent oxygen absorbent composition.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein there is associated with the reagent a visual indicator member adapted to indicate the activity of the reagent, for example, a colour change of the indicator can reflect the amount of oxygen absorbed by a reagent which absorbs oxygen.

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